

DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 249 469

CS 007 798

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TITLE A Challenge for Third-World Education: Changing Male/Female Literacy in Pakistan.
PUB DATE Apr 84
NOTE 23p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association (68th, New Orleans, LA, April 23-27, 1984).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)
EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Adult Basic Education; Birth Rate; *Developing Nations; Educational Finance; Educational Objectives; *Educational Planning; Educational Policy; Educational Strategies; Elementary Education; *Illiteracy; *Literacy Education; *Measurement Techniques; Politics of Education; *Womens Education
IDENTIFIERS *Pakistan

ABSTRACT

Noting that the formal education system in Pakistan has failed to make an impact on the nation's literacy rate, this paper reviews efforts since 1955 to improve education and adult literacy education and discusses reasons why these programs have not met most of their goals. The first portion of the paper presents an evaluation of the impact of primary level education on literacy rates and summarizes the aims and results achieved for each five-year planning period from 1955 to 1975, giving particular attention to the issues of underfunding and the failure of increases in primary school enrollments to keep pace with the annual increase in population growth. The second portion of the paper evaluates the impact of the adult literacy program and criticizes these efforts for being too small in magnitude, failing to motivate participants, and lacking educational research, materials, and teaching methods for adults. In addition, this section discusses the National Literacy Programme, a comprehensive national plan to be in operation from 1983 to 1993, which has as a major goal the reduction of female illiteracy, a culturally induced phenomenon that devalues education for women and has kept their participation in literacy programs to a minimum. An analysis of the program's strengths and weaknesses follows, with an emphasis on the need for a workable measurement of literacy. Problems in the area of relevant instructional materials and curricula, teacher qualification standards, and a specific implementation plan are also noted. (RBW)

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A Challenge for Third-World Education:
Changing Male/Female Literacy in Pakistan

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The importance of literacy to the development of Pakistan has been consistently reiterated by the government since independence in 1947 (Malik, 1981). Literacy rates in this modernizing country appear to be declining despite the resources that have been channeled into related educational programs since 1955. The short history of Pakistan is characterized by continuous efforts to improve educational programming (Ahmad, 1981), but the 2.3% annual population growth rate (UNESCO, undated) and difficulties in program implementation contribute to the obstacles hindering the progress of literacy efforts.

The challenge of eradicating illiteracy through universal education and equal access to education for females clearly was accepted as the primary focus of early education policies (Government of Pakistan, 1972). Subsequently, this focus for educational policy was expanded to delineate seven major aims of educational policy set forth by the martial law government in 1978 (Ahmad, 1981). A commitment to literacy was emphasized in the following policy statement:

To provide a minimum acceptable level of functional literacy and fundamental education to all citizens of the country irrespective of their faith, caste and creed in order to enable them to participate productively in the total national effort. (p. 46)

In order to achieve the goals of this National Education Policy of 1978, twelve strategies also were articulated for moving toward goal attainment.

Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans, April, 1984.

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Pakistan's barriers to eradication of illiteracy are certainly not unique.

In a discussion of literacy efforts in third-world countries, Werner (1979)

states:

Although countries of the developing world invest a substantial amount of their budget (up to 30%) in primary education, less than half of children of primary-school age attend school. Dropout rates for primary-school children in the developing countries range from three to eight out of every ten, with many more girls than boys dropping out before reaching functional literacy. In addition, people who barely learn to read and write and then fail to practice these skills often forget what little they have learned; thus, the figures for literacy in some developing countries appear inflated, and much of the financial investment in primary education in the developing countries may be wasted. (p. 333)

Although education is viewed as having the capacity to change the society and to break the existing patterns that are associated with low productivity in Pakistan (Ahmad, 1982), the current focus in education is its usefulness as a primary vehicle for transmission of Islamization in the society (Sadiq, 1982).

Discussions of educational reform stimulated by Islamization seldom address illiteracy directly (i.e., Badawi, 1979; Hussain & Ashraf, 1979; Sadiq, 1982). Conversely, literacy education was central to reform movements in other third-world countries like Brazil (Siddiqui, 1982). If the overall literacy rate is to be improved, it would be expected that considerable resources would need to be allocated both to adult literacy programs and to primary education (Werner, 1979). Unfortunately, studies evaluating the implementation of educational policies reveal that primary education has suffered from the effects of diversion of allocated funds into higher levels of education (Ahmad, 1981). In fact, the formal education system in Pakistan has failed to make an impact on improving the nation's literacy rates (Malik, 1981).

This paper addresses the gap between educational planning and implementation since 1955. It is a discussion of the hypothesized relationship between

educational efforts in primary and adult literacy programs and the data on literacy during the same period. Both educational goals and literacy rates are usually differentiated by gender; therefore, the challenge of increasing literacy will be discussed separately for males and females when differences are specified in government documents.

Evaluation of Primary Education's Impact

Because the first efforts at educational planning in Pakistan were not actually concrete plans of action, a series of specific plans for implementation of educational policy was instituted in 1955 (Ahmad, 1982). An evaluation of educational goals is reflected in budget allocations, funding levels, and observable indicators of performance toward goal attainment. Each of these factors is presented as it is addressed in the government's evaluations of four Five-Year Plans.

First Five-Year Plan

Among the educational objectives of the First Five Year Plan, enrichment of primary education ranked first. Unfortunately, out of a modest 249.1 million Rupee budget, primary education ranked last in the proposed allocation of funds (20% of the budget) (Ahmad, 1982). In actuality, the allocation was only partially funded resulting in only 7.4% of the education budget being spent for primary education from 1955 to 1960 (See Table 1). Being aware of the situation in which expenditures for higher levels of education were considerably more than those for primary education, Pakistan was accused of trying to build an inverted pyramid (Huq, 1963).

Considering the underfunding issue, the implementation of the primary education part of the plan was, of course, less than desirable. In moving toward

Table 1
Comparison of Allotments and Expenditures for
Primary Education (1955-1977)

Five-Year Plans	Per cent of budget Allotted	Percent of budget Expended	Amount of budget in Million Rupees
First Five Year Plan (1955-60)*	20.0	7.4	249.1
Second Five Year Plan (1960-65)*	16.6	4.5	395.5
Third Five Year Plan (1965-70)*	6.9	2.5	813.2
One-year Plans** (1972-1976)		66.5	3352.6

Sources:

* Ahmad, 1982

** Ahmad, 1981

an objective to establish 4,000 new primary schools, only 2,400 were established (Ahmad, 1982). In addition, an increase in primary school enrollment was reported as attaining only about 40% of the target. The resulting 2% rate of annual increase in primary school enrollment was less than the annual increase in population reported as 2.6% by Ahmad.

The First Five Year Plan certainly failed to achieve its long range objective of universal primary education. Ahmad (1982) concludes that the plan was a victim of vested interests and the indifference to education that accompanies an aristocratic society which does not appreciate the importance of wide-spread primary education. Unfortunately, the negative evaluation of this plan was linked to a reported change in literacy. The decline of the literacy rate from 16.4% in the Census of 1951 to 13.6% in the 1961 Census (See Table 2) was noted as representative of an out-of-balance approach to the problem of literacy (Huq, 1963).

Second Five-Year Plan

The Second Five Year Plan was evaluated as more successful in the attainment of its objectives (Government of Pakistan Planning Commission, 1960). The major objective relating to primary education was to raise school attendance among children of ages six to eleven.

Primary education was allocated 16.6% of the 395.5 million Rupee budget (See Table 1). Although 99% of the full budget was expended, only 4.5% of these funds were actually allotted to primary education from 1960-1965 (Ahmad, 1982). The shortage of funds was reflected in another failure to attain the objectives of the plan associated with primary education. Although primary school attendance improved from 36% in 1960 to 43% in 1965, primary school children were not pro-

Table 2
Reported Changes in Literacy in Pakistan over 30 Years

Census Year	Definitions*	Literacy Rates (%)**		
		Total	Male	Female
1951	Ability to read any clear print in any language	16.4% of total population	not available	
1961	Ability to read with understanding a short statement in any language	13.6% of total population	20.1	6.1
1972	Ability to read and write with understanding in any language	21.7% of population age ten and above	30.2	11.6
1981	Ability to read newspaper and to write a simple letter in any language	23.3% of population age ten and above	31.8	13.7

Sources:

* Malik, 1981

** Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, 1983

vided with school buildings and other basic needs (Government of Pakistan Planning Commission, 1966). Again the manner of implementing educational policy through the second plan seemed to augment imbalance in the educational structure (Ahmad, 1982). The imbalance was again attributed to the "aristocratic character of the society" (p. 32).

Third Five-Year Plan

The Third Five Year Plan was similar to the first two plans as it was "formulated within the framework of the long-term perspective plan (1965-85)" (Ahmad, 1982, p. 32). Even though this plan was interrupted by the war with India, it was revised and continued to stress the balanced development of education (Government of Pakistan Planning Commission, 1965). Improvements to widen the base of primary education were offered as one part of a two part thrust that again failed to be implemented (Ahmad, 1982). Ahmad notes that the lowest levels of funding being allocated to the highest priority goal was "inexplicable in face of the Government policy to attain free compulsory education up to class V" (p. 35) by 1980. Primary education was allocated only 6.9% of the 813.2 million Rupee budget while only 2.5% of the budget was actually expended on primary education from 1965 to 1970 (See Table 1). Although the third plan proposed to increase primary school enrollment from 43% to 70%, enrollments increased only to 46% (Ahmad, 1982). Similarly, proposals to establish 25,000 new schools were only 20% achieved while proposed improvements to 12,000 existing primary schools were reported accomplished in only 7,750.

Even though the literacy rate from the 1961 census was still being reported at 13.6%, the failures of the first three five-year plans to impact primary education positively could not help but contribute to an expected further decline

in literacy. The failures in the third plan were for the largest part attributed to ineffective expenditure of the funds allotted to primary education. The most serious weakness of this plan was that recurring expenditure amounts were omitted from financial planning. It was necessary for Provincial Governments to fund any recurring expenditures because in the national plan arrangements had been made only for development expenditures. It is presumed that the financial crises in implementation of the third plan made a significant contribution to the reported increases in school dropouts (Ahmad, 1982) and to the generally inadequate facilities for primary education.

Fourth Five-Year Plan

A political crisis in which East Pakistan (Bangladesh) was separated from Pakistan resulted in a delay in announcing the implementation of the Fourth Five Year Plan (1970-75) (Ahmad, 1981). Among the prominent goals of this plan were universal education until Class V for boys by 1979 and for girls by 1984 (Government of Pakistan, 1972). In order to achieve equal opportunities in education for all, nationalization of English Medium Schools and religious institutions began (Ahmad, 1981). This effort to nationalize schools is further described as failing to achieve the objectives because it was applied to all levels of education. Consequently, funds again were inequitably diverted from primary education to colleges and higher levels of education.

Funding for developmental programs in education was done on an annual basis from 1972 to 1977 (Ahmad, 1981). Due to the uncertainty of foreign aid and increasing prices the one-year expenditures were deemed desirable. For the first time it is clear that primary education became a first priority item in expenditures (See Table 1). Based on total expenditures of 3352.6 million

Rupees, primary education expenditures comprised 66.5% of the budget between 1972 and 1976.

In spite of the increased funding, no significant improvement in primary education is noted (Ahmad, 1981). Ahmad cites the World Bank Report of 1980 figures reporting only 75% of boys and 33% of girls of the relevant age groups attending Pakistan's primary schools. He asserts that 46% of the children of this age group have no educational facilities and that universal primary education is still far from reach. Mirza (1981) reports that primary education became free in 1972 and provides data to illustrate steadily rising enrollments in classes one through eight from 1947 through 1979. Based on this data, it is clear that female participation has increased but is far below the participation of males. Although 65% of males were attending primary schools in 1979 only 17.3% of females were reported as enrolled. It seems evident that implementation of policies aiming toward universal education for females by 1992 (Government of Pakistan, 1979) falls far short of expected levels of progress toward free primary education for all.

Ahmad (1981) notes that the population is now increasing by more than 3% each year, an increase that far exceeds the increase in educational facilities. The failure of higher levels of funding to impact these educational statistics and, of course, literacy rates appears to be attributed to high rates of wastage and growing population rates. Hussain (1981) explains the concept of wastage as having three primary components. (1) Low achievement standards result in promotion of some deficient students and jeopardy to the efficiency of the educational system. (2) Grade repetition is applied to the majority of students. (3) High dropouts rates of over 50% in primary schools result in these

individuals lapsing into illiteracy. Hussain purports that "many children dropout after grade one or two without even reaching any stage of literacy" (p. 100). He identifies weaknesses in teaching methods, teacher's attitudes, and socioeconomic factors as important influences on the concept of wastage.

In order to make primary education universal, UNESCO (1970) recommends an expenditure of 5% of a country's G.N.P. By 1980 Pakistan was spending less than 2% of its G.N.P. on education (Government of Pakistan, 1979). The pursuit of the goal of universal education has been slowed by problems in implementation of educational plans as well as low levels of expenditure for education. Ahmad (1981) notes that changes in government interrupt the continuity of educational planning and implementation. After commenting on the problem of wastage, he emphasizes that population growth is a primary source of frustration in pursuing universal primary education. "After every 15 years we have to spend 50 per cent more on primary education in order to maintain the present standard. That is why in spite of tremendous increase in educational expenditure since 1947, there is no appreciable increase in literacy" (p. 53). Failure to control population growth will certainly prolong the crisis in primary education (Iqbal, 1977).

According to the most recent reports, only 51% of primary school age children are enrolled in school (Government of Pakistan 1983). The high dropout rate is cited as a major barrier to literacy efforts. In fact, only about "35% of the children age nine reach class V. The rest drop out (p. 6). The higher literacy rate for the 1971 census (23.3% as reported in Table 2) appears to be a substantial increase that could be linked to the emphasis on funding primary education, yet actual changes in literacy measurement and definition result in artificial inflation of these percentages. Such instability in

measurement results in an inability to actually study rate change.

Efforts to expand primary education are without precedent, yet research indicates that a parallel effort to educate adults is highly desirable if the goal of universal primary education is to be attained (Government of Pakistan, 1983). Clearly, stability in measurement procedures and in the definition of literacy is essential to the study of the impact of education on literacy. Thus, the discussion of the impact of adult literacy programming will be restricted to program evaluation factors.

Evaluation of Adult Literacy Program's Impact

Adult literacy programs in Pakistan have grown out of knowledge of the great contribution to society made by individuals who are educated. Therefore, the provision of basic education to adults is recognized as essential to growth in the productive capacities of the nation's people (Ribich, 1976).

Accelerated school enrollment or extensive expenditures on primary education alone are not sufficient to overcome illiteracy. It is clear that when illiteracy is high the benefits of national development have been directed a small minority of the population resulting in most social cultural and economic inequities (Government of Pakistan, Ministry of Education, 1983). Such conditions are described as a negation of the ideology on which Pakistan was founded. In fact, Islam contains an emphasis on the need for education of all people irrespective of age, sex or race (Malik, 1981).

The massive proportion of illiteracy especially in rural areas and among women is a hindrance to the nation's development (Government of Pakistan, 1983). Although an overall literacy rate of 23.3 was reported in 1981 (See Table 2), "there were 42.4 million illiterates aged 10 years and above" (p. 7). At the

current population growth rate it is estimated that 63 million illiterates would be in need of education by 1993 if a mass education program is not instituted at this time. "With the fast population growth rate, the absolute number of illiterates would be over 65 million by the end of the century" (p. 6). The task force of the Standing Committee on Adult and Special Education of the National Education Council has undertaken a mass education effort. The goal of this program over a five year period is to increase literacy to 26% overall (35% for males and 17% for females).

The new National Literacy Programme (1983-93) follows the implementation and evaluation of four Five-Year Plans for Adult Literacy. These previous efforts were criticized as being too small in magnitude, failing to motivate participants, and lacking educational research, materials and teaching methods for adults (Malik, 1981).

Early Five Year Plans

The first and second five year plans were similar in their approach to literacy education. The first Five Year Plan (1955-60) addressed adult literacy programming as a part of the Village Agricultural and Industrial Development Programme (Malik, 1981). The specific objectives were reported as unattained since the program was abandoned apparently due to underfunding. Similar program planning was mentioned in the Second Five-Plan (1960-65), but the emphasis was placed on teaching better farming practices with no real effort made towards eradicating illiteracy.

Little change in adult literacy efforts appeared in the next two five year plans. In the Third Five-Year Plan, only about one percent of participants in

the agricultural extension program received literacy education (Government of Pakistan Planning Commission, 1970). Underfunding problems were not adequately addressed until the Fourth Five-Year Plan (1970-75) (Malik, 1981). Although a comprehensive plan was drafted and 2.3% of the total education budget was allocated to adult education, a political crisis prevented its implementation. Even though numerous adult education centers were established, they did not attract many adults and "many of those who were enrolled dropped out without attaining literacy skills" (p. 166).

The National Literacy Programme

In 1972, The New Education Policy was announced (Malik, 1981). Adult literacy programming was assigned to the people's Work Programme, an office of the Department of Local Government and Rural Development. Later the Allama Iqbal Open University began operating experimental programs in literacy. Concerns for Pakistan's low ranking in world literacy has partially prompted renewed efforts toward planning adult literacy education. The collaborative efforts of the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, Allama Iqbal Open University, Department of Social Welfare and the Women's Division are reflected in a new National Literacy Programme (Government of Pakistan, 1983). This comprehensive national plan for literacy education is in the infancy of implementation.

The National Literacy Programme 1983-1993 is a ten year plan designating responsibilities for actual implementation to the Literacy and Mass Education Commission. The plan is similar to the series of plans for primary education in at least one aspect, establishment of extremely high goals. The problem that must be rectified is repeatedly verbalized as one of female illiteracy. (Government of Pakistan, 1983). It is clear that the goal of raising the

female literacy rate from 14% to 48% during the implementation of the first five years of the plan is unusually ambitious.

Numerous problems associated with the attainment of the high female literacy goal have been articulated. Among them are:

1. Family traditions that devalue education of females;
2. Lack of functional economic benefits associated with education for women;
3. Sparse models of literate females in the local environment and in the media;
4. Reservations of literate women toward teaching literacy skills to disadvantaged women;
5. Lack of instructional materials for literacy that are of high interest to women.

In spite of these difficulties, exceptional efforts are being made to rectify the female literacy. Many literacy centers have been established, yet few women appear to be benefitting from instruction.

The National Literacy Programme developed by The Task Force of Standing Committees on Adult and Special Education presents several conceptual strengths related to the national goal of literacy enhancement (Government of Pakistan, 1983). They are:

1. The fundamental need for a comprehensive literacy plan is supported.
2. Priorities for targeted portions of the population are clearly derived from current literacy data.
3. The administrative plan is constructed to maximize cooperation between governmental agencies at all levels.

4. The employment of a diversity of personnel as teaching resources is advocated.
5. A thorough training program and evaluation procedures are recommended to enhance successful implementation.

It was also noted that the prescribed plan neglects to address certain areas of difficulty that may impede actual implementation and evaluation of progress toward the goal of increasing national literacy. These difficulties involve (a) measurement of literacy; (b) relevant instructional materials and curricula; (c) teacher qualifications; and (d) development of a specific implementation plan. Descriptions and recommendations for resolution of these difficulties are appropriate topics of immediate concern, but only the measurement issue appears to relate directly to the focus of this paper.

Measurement of Literacy

The problem of measurement of literacy is essential to resolve if literacy rates are to be meaningful reflections of the development of Pakistan. It appears that resolution of this measurement problem is essential not only to evaluation of adult literacy and primary education programs, but also to providing a credible measure of literacy for global consumption. Issues related to definition of the concept of literacy, the census population, and appropriate measurement need resolution.

Each census from 1951 to 1981 has used a different definition of literacy (See Table 2). The definition established for the 1981 census is "ability to read a newspaper and to write a simple letter in any language" (Government of Pakistan, 1983, p. 3). Although this definition appears to be precise, it must be measured in several different languages in which census takers may

not be proficient. It appears that literacy efforts will be focused on teaching Urdu, the national language (Government of Pakistan, 1983). In rural areas the majority of the population generally speaks one of several regional languages. Because the current definition of literacy states that literacy in any language will be considered, censustakers must be prepared to appraise literacy in several languages.

Although a definition of literacy and measurement procedures developed for the use of censustakers exist, confidence in the results of this method for measuring literacy on a national basis is lacking (Inayatullah, 1983). It is recommended that a small kit for scientifically measuring literacy be developed by the federal literacy commission. Such a kit would contain materials designed to measure literacy according to the 1981 census definition for both regional languages and the national language. In addition, it is recommended that a one-hour training module be developed to instruct individuals in the use of this measurement kit. The training would include observation of a demonstration of the use of the kit and practice in administering and scoring measurement items for reading and writing.

The kit could consist of a maximum of 10 items on printed cards which would be used to measure reading with a limited vocabulary. Similar numbers of items would be used to instruct individuals to write a sentence characteristic of a simple letter. Although arithmetic computation is not included as an official part of the literacy definition, interest is articulated in establishing a scientific manner of measuring this aspect of adult literacy education (Inayatullah, 1983). A literacy kit could be augmented to include a similar number of arithmetic problems involving basic operations on one and two digit whole numbers.

Changes in literacy rates from 1951 to 1981 appear to be inflated not only by changing definitions of the concept of literacy but also by changing the definition of those who are included in the population surveyed by the censustakers (See Table 2). Although the entire population appears to be surveyed in the census of 1951 and 1961, in 1971 the procedure was changed to include only the segment of the population who were age ten and older (Government of Pakistan, 1983). Based on evaluations of primary education and adult literacy programs, it is clear that this presumed rise in literacy in 1971 is actually an artifact of measurement changes. Even small increases in 1981 cannot be indicative of any real change in literacy.

Even though the problem of female literacy has been addressed in numerous plans, literacy rates for females appear to reflect minimal growth (See Table 2). Unfortunately because measurement is severely flawed it is impossible to determine that any progress is being made. This problem of female literacy is reported to be a severe hindrance and is seen as primarily associated with rural illiteracy (Government of Pakistan, 1983). In the less developed provinces literacy among rural females is reported as less than 1%. The National Literacy Programme targets rural females as the top priority and presents an elaborate training scheme for personnel and for materials development.

Efforts to develop precise measurement procedures for appraisal of literacy are particularly important in rural areas. Specifically, literate censustakers in 1991 are likely to be males. Considering the societal restrictions on male/female interactions, it may be extremely difficult to assess female literacy especially in rural areas. It is clear that adult literacy education pro-

grammers and census appraisal planners begin to work toward development of procedures that can enhance the accuracy of literacy estimation. Such efforts are overdue and essential to assuring credible appraisal of literacy in 1991.

The National Literacy Programme (Government of Pakistan, 1983) outlines a general set of goals and administrative structure for a comprehensive national literacy plan. This plan places major responsibility for implementation on local officials. It would appear that procedures and materials for literacy instruction need to be the focus of at least one pilot project in a representative rural community. These aspects of development of a quality instructional implementation plan need to be directed by expert personnel in the literacy field. Conversely, arrangements for facilities and their management would best be served by the designated administrative structure. The success of any project will be dependent at least partially on the adequate transmission of information across the five levels of administration outlined in the plan.

It appears that the goal of increasing literacy among women is unlikely to be accomplished unless an implementation plan that is proven workable in rural villages is pilot tested to minimize barriers encountered in previous efforts. It is clear that specialists in materials production, teaching techniques, process and outcome evaluation, and motivation must be involved if pilot projects are to be successful. Once success is demonstrated, application of the demonstration model to other communities would be advised. Rapid expansion of services to thousands of communities may only result in loss of quality and weakening the potential for actual change in adult literacy levels.

Although the problem of literacy in Pakistan cannot be adequately studied

until precise measurement of literacy implemented, no time can be lost making improvements in primary education and adult literacy programs. The government of Pakistan is pursuing these goals through the Ministry of Education and the Commission on Literacy and Mass Education.

Conclusions

Efforts since 1955 in Pakistan to improve primary education and adult literacy education have failed to meet most goals for these programs. Although the major focus of these programs is aimed toward increasing the nation's literacy rate, the impact of educational change on literacy is impossible to ascertain. Specifically longitudinal change requires consistent definition of literacy and procedures for its measurement. Reported changes in literacy are apparently artifacts of inconsistent measurement rather than reflections of any improvements in development and implementation of plans for primary and adult literacy education.

The government of Pakistan is sensitive to the need for emphasis on literacy, but people who are concerned about mere survival have little interest in becoming literate (Malik, 1981). It is well known that adults in Pakistan are subject to many social pressures that may influence motivation to learn (Malik, 1982). Successful literacy efforts will need to address the specific learning patterns of adults and of children to overcome barriers to literacy. Some current literacy programs are using skill training as well as religion, health and nutrition as a basis for entry into literacy programs (Government of Pakistan, 1983), yet it is clear that extensive efforts must be made to motivate the population through creation of relevant literacy materials and training of enthusiastic teachers.

Reliable appraisal of literacy is essential also as an indirect evaluation for educational programs as well as a means of accurately assessing one aspect of national development. It is proposed that a literacy measurement kit be developed for use in adult literacy education and by censustakers in 1991. Such an improvement in literacy measurement is essential to the credibility of literacy reporting.

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